

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONER BUDGET MEETING
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
April 9th 2020

PRESENT: Commissioners Lauer, Piper, Morris, County Administrator Libby and Administrative Assistant Norcross

OTHERS PRESENT: Nursing Home Administrator Labore, Finance Manager Jurentkuff

Commissioner Lauer called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM and read the following statement:

As Chair of the Grafton County Commissioners, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is a physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting. In accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Lifesize for this electronic meeting. All members of the Commission have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through attending at the physical location.

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting. The meeting notice is also provided on the website of the Commission at www.co.grafton.nh.us.

Please note that all votes that are being taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Lauer stated "yes" and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting. Commissioner Piper stated "yes" and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting. Commissioner Morris stated "yes" and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting.

Nursing Home – Administrator Labore, Finance Manager Jurentkuff

Revenue

NHA Labore stated that when they put together their revenue budget they always talk about what they are looking for, for an average daily census for the year. This year they are trying to be cautious due to the COVID-19 outbreak. They are currently closed down to visitors and have not taken an admission since the beginning of March to ensure that the building is prepared in the event that they have an outbreak of the virus. The CDC has recommended that they immediately separate those residents that have tested positive so they needed to create space in order to do that. They have transformed their rehabilitation room into a COVID-19 unit. If a resident is showing positive or having symptoms they have six (6) beds set up in that room. Where this rehab room is located it allows them the opportunity to expand down a small hall on their maple unit if need be. In order to do all of this they needed to have the bed availability to move residents on that unit out and to do this they need to manage the census a little tighter. NHA Labore stated that other parts of the country have mandated Nursing Homes to take admissions from hospitals. This hasn't happened in New Hampshire yet but the surge has not happened. The surge is expected to be somewhere around April 28th – May 4th and there is the possibility that as hospitals fill up they will mandate Nursing Homes to take more residents. They have been asked weekly by DHHS to report how many beds they have available. NHA Labore noted that they are doing what they can with the census to ensure that they are prepared in the event they do have a positive case in the building. The census is currently 120 and for the FY21 budget they have started with a census of 123 knowing that it will take some time to get the census back up.

NHA Labore stated that they are not proposing any increases in private pay rates next year. For a private room they will be charging \$315/day and \$295 for a semi private room. They dropped the private pay census down to reflect where they are at this time.

Medicaid Census – NHA Labore stated they have decreased this census by three (3) but are also budgeting for a Medicaid Rate increase. This will be the second year of the state budget Medicaid Increase through HB4 that has been anticipated. This is a 3.1% increase in their Medicaid rate.

Veterans – NHA Labore stated that they are still doing well with their Veteran contract and anticipate keeping this census and budgeting for two (2) residents.

Medicaid PSP – NHA Labore stated that this large increase accounts for what they agreed that Grafton County would pay for IDN funding. CA Libby noted that this offsets the IDN expense that they added into the Commissioners' budget.

Physician Billing - NHA Labore stated that there is a decrease of \$23,000. He explained that they were able to enter into agreement with Ammonoosuc Community Health Services to provide Medical Doctor coverage in the building beginning July 1st. Dr. Wilmont will be retiring June 30th. Part of their agreement is one (1) of their doctors, Katelyn O'Donnell, will serve as the Medical Director in the building. She will serve on site for whenever the Nursing Home has a

skilled nursing admission, Medicare A, admission. Medicare requires that a Physician see a resident within 72 hours of admission. NHA Labore stated that they will have their Nurse Practitioner continue to work with them and supplemental coverage will be provided by a Nurse Practitioner from Ammonoosuc. They are anticipating that the decrease in this revenue line will be attributed to revenue that Ammonoosuc will be taking. NHA Labore explained that the \$62,050 they have budgeted in that revenue line item is the billing that their current Nurse Practitioner is anticipated to bring in and they subtracted what contribution Dr. Wilmont typically brings in and attributing that to what they believe Ammonoosuc will be doing on their end.

Cable TV- NHA Labore stated that they have budgeted for \$3,000 increase. Historically they have received large increases in the summer/fall so they are anticipating that increase in the budget.

Expense

NH Admin

Bed Tax expense – NHA Labore stated that they have budgeted a \$175,460 increase in this line item and explained that they are trying to better capture the actual tax expense that they get when they receive the large proshare payment in June and make it as close as possible. CA Libby explained that what has happened in the last couple of years is they have ended up being over expended in this budget because they have not been accurately budgeting for the tax they pay on the enhanced proshare payment at the end of the year.

Software Maint/Training – NHA Labore stated that they have budgeted \$13,500 for Competency & Annual Mandatory Education. He explained that he is hoping to implement an online Competency & Mandatory Education program for the staff. Historically this competency testing has done by each individual department and the mandatory education is conducted by the Staff Development Director. They are hoping to accomplish the mandate to have a competency training program in place. This program will allow them to have by department, a competency program designed to reflect what CMS' expectations are. It takes the gray area out and makes sure the competency assessment that CMS is expecting they do for their staff in each department is actually being met. Any changes that are made by CMS throughout the year, those changes get incorporated into that program which ensures they always know that the competencies that they are doing are reflective of what CMS is expecting. It gives them access to education to Nursing Assistants and Nurses as well that can be put towards their annual training. NHA Labore stated that he also has requirements that he has to adhere to every two (2) years and he would have access to that training through this program as well. This is all included in the \$13,500 cost and would allow them to eliminate other costs associated with monthly continuing education costs. It also saves on time that the Staff Development Director is spending putting these education pieces together.

Computer Hardware & Maintenance – NHA Labore stated that they have had items budgeted in the capital line that they are trying to move into this line which accounts for the \$2,500 increase.

Dietary

Food Supplements – NHA Labore stated that there is a \$5,000 increase. He explained that they are trying to consolidate their supplement usage and move towards one (1) standard supplement. He noted that it is working really well for the residents but is costlier. This supplement has great nutritional value and is helping with reestablishing/maintaining weight. NHA Labore noted that they also have three (3) or four (4) residents on a feeding pump and these costs are reflected in this line item.

Food Supplies – NHA Labore stated that this increase is reflective of the where they are tracking food costs.

Nursing

Wages – Director of Nursing – NHA Labore stated that they are still working on filling this position. He stated that they are anticipating the salary at \$100,000 based on some of the requests they are seeing in their hiring process.

Wages – Nursing Admin – NHA Labore stated that they still have not been able to hire the Unit Managers. They are pausing the Unit Manager positions but have still included the salaries in this line item. He stated that based on yesterday's discussions with a potential hire for the DON they have discussed working with the Unit Manager model and they feel they should leave these positions still budgeted for as they go through the process of hiring a new DON.

Wages – LPN's – NHA Labore stated that he has been in discussion with HR Director Clough in regards to the hiring and recruiting process. HR Director Clough has done an analysis and feels that they are not where they need to be in terms of salary. They have not been able to meet some salary requests and HR Director Clough is concerned about the equity of the wage charts. She is recommending a 3% adjustment to each position. This applies to the RN line as well. NHA Labore stated that in the hiring process, higher wages are now being requested and they are higher than what the County would normally start someone out at. He stated that the issue is if they start to hire nursing staff at a higher pay without adjusting the wage charts it breaks up the internal equity of the wage charts and where they started staff who are currently employed at the Nursing Home. CA Libby stated that the total projected increase for the LPN's is \$34,742.00 and \$30,310. NHA Labore noted that this increase does not include the LNA positions. HR Director Clough's analysis shows that they are on the higher end of the pay scale with the LNA's and does not feel an adjustment is needed at this time.

MNA Positions – NHA Labore stated that they are currently budgeted for 3.67 FTE and looking to include an additional three (3) FTE's. He explained that they are trying to utilize MNAs more due to the challenges with recruiting nurses. He stated that as they have more LNA classes that graduate, they are able to utilize MNA's more. They are able to take on medication administration duties to help the nurses out. They are looking to create three (3) new FTE's to help better create coverage on the nursing side. One (1) idea in theory is that this might help on the contract nursing as they can run a floor with one (1) nurse and an MNA. CA Libby asked if

they currently have 3.67 MNA's and asked how many contract LNA's they are currently using. NHA Labore stated that he believes they have six (6) right now. Commissioner Lauer asked with the increase in MNAs are there any reduction in LNA staffing levels. NHA Labore stated that they would not reduce the LNA staffing level.

NHA Labore stated that they are also proposing an increase in shift differentials for RNs and LPNs

Contract Nursing – NHA Labore stated that there is a large increase based on their six (6) month figures.

Education & Conference – NHA Labore noted that this large increase is in part due to the quarterly LNA training program that they now have in place. NHA Labore stated that they are also budgeting for their Staff Development/ Infection Preventionist Jamie Gadwah to attend the APIC Annual Conference (Association for Professionals in Infection Control). He stated that this is a national conference that they would like J. Gadwah to attend this year. She would get access to additional information for best practices in infection control. NHA Labore stated that this is emphasized every year and he can't stress enough the importance of this now with COVID -19. CMS is going to be spending a lot of time in their survey process looking at actions that facilities have taken to respond and prepare for the virus as well as the steps taken if a facility has had a positive case. NHA Labore stated that the Nursing Home in Washington State was just assessed a \$611,000 penalty by the Federal Government for not adhering to infection control practices. He stated that there is a lot that goes into infection prevention and this conference would be very important. The registration fee for this conference is \$685.

Contract – Education – NHA Labore explained that he is proposing to end the program. He stated that this is done with their current Medical Director and with the change in the Medical Director coming this year he feels that the program has been successful but they can now use that money elsewhere.

NHA Labore noted that the increases in the Nursing Supplies, Resident Supplies Chargeable, and Nursing Supplies – Gloves are due to them trying to plan for the need for supplies and the prices increase they are seeing right now due to COVID -19. He stated that they are paying more for products and vendors are having a hard time delivering their supplies.

Travel Expense – NHA Labore noted that the \$1,200 increase is the lodging and airfare for J. Gadwah to attend the APIC Annual Conference.

Restorative Nursing

Rehab Supplies – NHA Labore noted that the \$11,700 increase is due to moving some of their capital expenses to this line item. FM Jurentkuff stated that part of the increase is budgeting for some supplies that they did not have enough money in this line last year. They had to take from another line. NHA Labore noted that they are also looking to enter into agreement with Posture Works for cushions for \$3,600. They have a cushion replacement program. He explains that this

company gives them better products and is done on a monthly basis. The rehab staff were impressed with the quality of the cushion and feel that it would work out very well for the residents.

Health Information Management

Wages – HIM Specialist – NHA Labore noted that this position is currently vacant. The person that was in this position was on medical leave and was unable to come back to work. This position was budgeted at 32 hours and was a hold over position that they needed to look at once it was vacant. He explained that in order to be in line with the Affordable Care Act they are requesting to increase this position to a 35-hour position.

Housekeeping

Supplies – NHA Labore noted that this increase is another line they are planning on having an increase in due to COVID -19.

Pharmacy & Physician

Rx – Charged to Residents – FM Jurentkuff explained that is the first full year they have been using this line. They have also had a large number of Medicaid Pending residents and once approved for Medicaid these prescriptions get charged back to Medicaid.

Contract Services

Contract Physician - CA Libby asked NHA Labore if they are going to be paying Ammonoosuc the \$12,000 for the Medical Director. NHA Labore stated that they will be. CA Libby stated that she knows NHA Labore wanted to keep the \$65,000 in the line for Contract Physician as a safety net but feels they need to talk about that. She stated that the Nursing Home budget is increased a lot and feels that leaving that in there doesn't make sense. NHA Labore stated that he did think it would be wise to hold onto that as a precautionary measure. Commissioner Lauer stated that if something were to come up and they needed that money they could find it elsewhere in the budget but would prefer not to hit the tax payers with it if it is not necessary. After discussion with the Commissioners NHA Labore stated that he is ok with removing the \$65,000.

Capital Reserve

NHA Labore reviewed his list of capital reserve requests totaling \$205,028.09 with the Commissioners and answered questions.

Nursing Home COVID-19 Update – NHA Labore stated that they currently do not have a case in the building. When they do their planning sessions they base it off of having a positive case. The actions they have taken are based off the assumption they will have a positive case. He stated that one of the things that came up last week was whether a press release or PR standpoint was necessary in order to get it to the media if they do have a positive case before the media releases

it themselves. He asked the Commissioners their opinion. Commissioner Lauer stated that he should take that step now to put out a press release that they do not have a case now and list the precautions they are talking if a case does come. NHA Labore stated that he has been working on wording for a press release and will get that done. He also stated that another question that has been brought up is whether anyone is offering any sort of incentive pay during this; whether they add a percentage to someone's pay that is dealing with COVID 19. CA Libby stated that she and HR Director Clough discussed incentive or hazard pay. She doesn't know if any County has implemented this but it is being discussed. She stated that during a discussion with FEMA they are questioning if incentive pay is reimbursable through FEMA funds. They have talked about starting to look at putting a plan together for what a hazard pay/incentive pay might look like. NHA Labore stated that they are starting to see disruption in their supply orders, non-related to PPE so that is starting to be concerning. Commissioner Lauer asked about the free meals for employees and if they have put that into place yet. NHA Labore stated that they have done one (1) free meal to date. They on having another meal next week and possibly one (1) every other week. He stated that the hard part that they have run into with doing free meals to all staff members is the large amount of food they go through and the extra work that it puts on the dietary staff. The Dietary Director was hesitant in making every meal free because of the amount of work that would create and also not knowing who is going to pass a screening process when they come into work.

Social Services Discussion

The Commissioners reviewed an executive summary of Grafton County Social Service Budget requests from Outside Agencies that Commissioner Morris had put together.

Commissioner Piper stated that she is in favor of level funding all organizations except TLC, Grafton County Senior Citizens Council and North County Transit. She feels they should honor those requests for increases. She stated that she also feels they should fund no new organizations except for the Plymouth Area Recovery Connection. Commissioner Morris stated that she feels they should fund Tri County Cap Fuel Assistance this year. They requested \$10,000. Commissioner Lauer asked if they can fund them at \$2,000 or \$3,000 this year. It is more than they have received as they have not been funded by the County in the past. Commissioner Piper agreed. Commissioner Morris stated that she is in favor of this as it is a very important agency. The Commissioners discussed it further and agreed at \$5,000. Commissioner Piper stated that she doesn't feel they should fund the new request from the Haven. She feels that they work closely with Twin Pines and perhaps other monies are available. Commissioner Morris noted that she wanted to look into this organization more before making a final decision. Commissioner Piper suggested that they eliminate the funding for the Pemi Youth Center. Commissioner Lauer stated that the County is providing 5% of their budget. She stated from what she understands this is an after school program. Commissioner Piper stated that if they are looking to focus on their target services then she doesn't feel this is one. The Commissioners were all in agreement to not fund the Pemi Youth Center. The Commissioners further discussed the Social Services budget and what they feel they should or should not fund.

Commissioner Lauer asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the April 2nd Budget meeting. Commissioner Piper had a couple of grammatical edits.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to approve the minutes from the March 24th Budget meeting as amended. Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Morris “yes”, Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

CA Libby sent the Commissioners the check registers that are in need of approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Morris moved to approve check registers 44-45; 1143; 1147-1153. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Morris “yes”, Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

Coronavirus Updates – CA Libby stated that she has already told the Commissioners about the inventive pay that they are working on. She stated that yesterday the County Administrators had a phone conference with FEMA. She has filled out the request that they have for public assistance which goes through NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management. They expect to have the Virtual applicant resource meetings next week. They will group the agencies together and go through in detail to decide what things are reimbursement and the process to submit for reimbursement. She stated that things are geared towards reimbursement for Public Safety. She does not know how much they are doing in the Nursing Home and the DoC will end up being reimbursable. CA Libby stated that they continue to track and document every COVID – 19 expense they have for possible reimbursement.

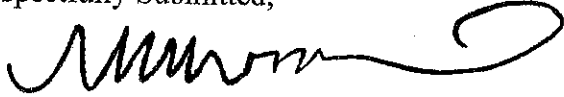
CA Libby stated that Kate Horgan sent them information regarding stimulus package #4 that would include some items that would be beneficial to Counties. There has been a bill submitted that would allow counties under 500 reimbursements for lost revenue. She stated that there seems to be resources that will help them recoup lost revenue.

CA Libby stated that the budget has a 5.64% tax increase before COLA. Commissioner Piper stated that she feels that this is unacceptable. She agrees with Commissioner Morris stating that she doesn't want to have this conversation today, they need time to think about everything. She stated that she feels there will need to be cuts and more discussion on the COLA. The Commissioners all agreed that the budget needs to be cut. The Nursing Home budget is up \$1.3 million. CA Libby noted that \$850,000 of that is contract nursing and the increase in bed tax. CA Libby stated that she will firm up all of the numbers she has and mail out hard copies to everyone with everything as it stands today. When they meet next Thursday, they can make a list of everything they would like to see and cuts be made. Commissioner Lauer asked if there is anything to be gained by asking Sheriff Stiegler and Director Andross to look at that cut in Dispatch revenue. CA Libby stated that there is a lot to be gained from it and that is something they can discuss. She also noted that contract nursing spending has grown dramatically and needs to be looked at closely. She stated that she would get the Commissioners some historical

spending information. Commissioner Piper stated that she would like to be involved with the conversation with NHA Labore so that she can better understand the usage. She stated that they can further discuss all of these items at next week's meeting once they have had a chance to review the whole budget.

12:13 PM With no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marcia Morris', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Marcia Morris,
Clerk